

**Children's Bureau
Child and Family Services Review
Key Findings Report
Vermont Department of Social and Rehabilitative Service**

The Children's Bureau and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) administer the child and family services reviews. The reviews comprise two phases: (1) the Statewide Assessment, during which the State analyzes its child welfare data and practice, and (2) the onsite review, during which Federal and State teams examine outcomes for children and families by conducting case record reviews and case-related interviews, and assess State systemic issues through stakeholder interviews.

Following the onsite review, Federal staff prepare a Final Report, which is provided to the State not more than 30 days after the onsite review or resolution of a discrepancy. States are provided a courtesy copy of the Final Report before the official Final Report is issued. In order for the State to be found in substantial conformity in any one of the seven outcomes reviewed, the outcome must be determined to be substantially achieved in 95 percent (90 percent during the first review) of the cases reviewed. States that are found not to be in conformity on any of the seven outcomes or seven systemic factors must prepare a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that includes action steps and benchmarks for bringing the State into conformity. The PIP is due not more than 90 days after the State receives the courtesy copy of the Final Report. This report presents key findings from the Vermont Final Report of the review.

I. Identifying Information and Review Dates

ACF Region: I

Date of Onsite Review: April 30–May 4, 2001

Period Under Review: October 1, 1998–April 30, 2001

Date Final Report Issued: July 2, 2001

Date Program Improvement Plan Due: September 30, 2001

Date Program Improvement Plan Approved: March 27, 2002

Estimated Penalty: \$122,325

II. Highlights of Findings

A. The State met the national standards for two of the six standards.

B. The State achieved substantial conformity for one of the seven outcomes.

C. The State achieved substantial conformity for five of the seven systemic factors.

III. State's Conformance With the National Standards

Data Indicator	National Standard (Percentage)	State's Percentage	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
Repeat Maltreatment	6.1 or less	6.58		X
Maltreatment of Children in Foster Care	.57 or less	.15	X	
Foster Care Re-Entries	8.6 or less	8	X	
Length of Time To Achieve Reunification	76.2 or more	64.91		X
Length of Time To Achieve Adoption	32 or more	23.01		X
Stability of Foster Care Placements	86.7 or more	69.96		X
IV. State's Conformance With Outcomes				
Outcome		Achieved Substantial Conformity	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity	
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.			X	
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.			X	
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.			X	
Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.			X	
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.			X	
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.		X		
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.			X	
V. State's Conformance With Systemic Factors				

Systemic Factor	Achieved Substantial Conformity	Did Not Achieve Substantial Conformity
Statewide Information System	X	
Case Review System	X	
Quality Assurance System		X
Training	X	
Service Array	X	
Agency Responsiveness to the Community	X	
Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention		X
VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor¹		
<p>A. The review noted the following strengths regarding the outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sufficient efforts to reduce the risk of harm to children • Preventing children from re-entering foster care within 12 months of a previous discharge • Making efforts to provide independent living services for children age 16 and older • Making efforts to assist children in attaining permanency through a goal of other planned living arrangement • Placing children in close proximity to their biological families and with their siblings, when appropriate • Facilitating visitation of children in foster care with their parents and siblings • Preserving children's connections to their family, faith, community, culture, and friends • Making diligent efforts to locate and assess relatives as potential placement resources for children • Involving parents and children in case planning 		

¹ Visit the Children's Bureau Web site at <www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwrp/tools/sumfinding.doc> for more detailed information about the child and family services reviews outcomes and systemic factors.

VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor (Continued)

- Meeting the educational needs of children
- Meeting the physical and dental health needs of children

B. The review noted the following concerns regarding the outcomes:

- Not investigating reports of child maltreatment in a timely manner
- Not preventing repeat maltreatment of children
- Not making diligent efforts to maintain children safely in their homes
- Not providing stable placements for children in foster care
- Not achieving permanency goals for children in a timely manner
- Not making diligent efforts to achieve adoption for children in a timely manner
- Not making efforts to support the parent-child relationship of children in foster care
- Not assessing the needs of, nor providing services to, parents, foster parents, and children
- Not visiting with children or parents frequently enough to monitor and promote the safety and well-being of children
- Not meeting the mental health needs of children

C. The review noted the following strengths regarding the systemic factors:

- Statewide Information System
 - The statewide automated information system can determine the status, demographics, location, and goals for all children in foster care.
- Case Review System
 - Children in foster care have written case plans and children and parents are consistently involved in case planning.
 - The status of each child is reviewed in court at least every 6 months.
 - Permanency hearings are held for children in foster care within 12 months of entry into care.

VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor (Continued)

- Foster parents, pre-adoptive parents, and relative caretakers of children in foster care are routinely notified of and given an opportunity to participate in hearings for children.
- Training
 - The State operates a staff development and training program.
 - The State provides ongoing training addressing the skills and knowledge needed for staff to perform their duties.
 - The State provides training addressing the skills and knowledge needed for current and prospective foster and adoptive parents and staff of State-licensed facilities that care for children in foster care to carry out their responsibilities.
- Service Array
 - The State offers an array of services to meet the needs of children and families.
 - Services are accessible to families and children in all locations of the State.
 - Services offered are individualized to the unique needs of children and families.
- Agency Responsiveness to the Community
 - The State engages in ongoing consultation with consumers, service providers, courts, and other stakeholders.
 - The State jointly develops with its stakeholders annual reports of progress.
 - The State's services are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal programs serving the same population.
- Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention
 - The State has implemented standards for foster and adoptive family homes and child care institutions.
 - State standards for foster and adoptive family homes are applied uniformly.
 - The State conducts criminal clearances for foster care and adoptive families and operates a case planning process that includes provisions for ensuring children's safety.

VI. Key Findings by Outcome and Systemic Factor (Continued)

D. The review noted the following concerns regarding the systemic factors:

- Case Review System
 - Delays exist in achieving termination of parental rights.
- Quality Assurance System
 - Standards have not been implemented to ensure that children in foster care are provided with quality services to address their needs.
 - The State does not operate an identifiable quality assurance system.
- Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention
 - The State does not diligently recruit foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the children for whom homes are needed.
 - The State does not use cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for children.